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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 18th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 8 July 1992, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

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Enhancing international cooperation for development: the role of the United Nations system (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

ENHANCING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (continued) (E/1992/27, Supplement No. 7, E/1992/40, E/1992/64, E/1992/82 and Add.1)

Mr. BIVERO (Observer for Venezuela) said that the United Nations currently had a unique opportunity to redefine its functions and operational methods for strengthening international development cooperation. Recent political and economic changes offered the international community a chance to more effectively address the problems of unsatisfied human needs, inequitable social development and persistent imbalances in sustained economic growth. Venezuela welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to streamline the work of the Organization in pursuit of those objectives.

With regard to future development priorities, his country attached particular importance to social development and the strengthening of human resources. Progress in the social field depended, however, on a common understanding being reached on the issues of resource flows, liberalization of international trade and coordination of macroeconomic policies. The Council was in a unique position to promote through dialogue and compromise greater acceptance of the concept of the interdependence of those two spheres of policy.

In Venezuela's view, economic and social development in the 1990s would depend more on the overall flow of resources than on the management or financing of operational activities. The flow of resources would require economic reforms and the liberalization of trade and investment regimes and would determine the limits to the social costs of structural adjustment. Using its new working methods, the Council should place emphasis on those international economic policies designed to ensure that recent reforms were consolidated by resource flows earmarked for productive investment and social

(Mr. Bivero, Observer, Venezuela)

improvement. The Council should also review current decision-making mechanisms on matters affecting the global macroeconomic environment in order to avoid duplication. The challenge before the Council was to provide guidelines for and enhance the effectiveness of international cooperation. In that connection, Venezuela welcomed the high-level dialogue currently taking place in the Council. Such a substantive dialogue was essential to restoring the credibility and effectiveness of the Organization.

His country recognized the relationship between peace and security on the one hand and economic and social development on the other. Both areas of international policy required the expert attention of the specialized agencies. In that regard, the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development to be established by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session represented a significant step. The proposed summit meeting on social development would also enhance recognition of the urgent need to give economic interdependence a human dimension.

Mr. HATANO (Japan) said that structural change since the end of the cold war had made it possible to discuss development issues using a common vocabulary and within a framework of participatory democracy. A foundation had been laid for pragmatic cooperation free of ideological differences and confrontational posturing.

The United Nations was uniquely qualified as a forum for the discussion of development strategies and policies, but it was questionable whether the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council were living up to their potential. In contemplating how United Nations activities might be rendered more effective, it was useful to recall the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, which had clearly outlined fundamental aims and special priorities. A number of United Nations funds, programmes and agencies having the mandate and capability to implement activities in any of the Strategy's priority areas were already in place. What was missing was a blueprint for translating the goals of the Strategy into specific policies. The Strategy must be incorporated into the development programmes of recipient countries; such programmes would of course differ from country to country, but each should serve as a blueprint for

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

activities in the country concerned including those in which bilateral donors and international organizations were involved. Without such blueprints, the United Nations system would not be able to respond appropriately to the changing needs of Member States.

The structures and agendas of the General Assembly and the Council should be reviewed, and the subsidiary bodies further streamlined, so that the United Nations might emerge as a leaner, more flexible system.

Within the United Nations system, the focus of operational activities must be "in the field". A unified United Nations presence at the country level was essential, with a sole resident coordinator acting as ambassador, and representatives of the various programmes and funds acting as counsellors in charge of their respective sectors. At the same time each United Nations programme and fund should further decentralize its institutional arrangements in order to enhance its flexibility at the field level.

To meet the challenges of a changing world, the United Nations must undertake bold, innovative and perhaps even painful reform measures to enhance the effectiveness of its economic and social activities.

Ms. MAIR (Jamaica) said that the social and economic mandates and structures of the United Nations system had the responsibility and the potential to address the global issues facing an increasingly interdependent world and, above all, to address the issue of poverty. However, only a reorganized and revitalized United Nations system could effectively carry out its mandates. People must be its central preoccupation and its overwhelming mandate: a new, strong vision of development was needed, a holistic vision that was people-centred, equitable and sustainable. It also implied a new partnership for development of equal sovereign States prepared to share their sovereignty for the good of their citizens, who inhabited a shared planet.

The challenge of translating those ideals, goals and mandates into effective structures and operations started at the policy-making level in the sectoral agencies which, however, functioned in virtual autonomy; hence the uncoordinated implementation of development policies and overlapping responsibilities. The national level of field operations bore the brunt of that uncoordinated modus operandi, and it was developing countries which

(Ms. Mair, Jamaica)

ultimately lost out. United Nations technical assistance was, or should be, designed to build national capacity for ultimate self-sufficiency, and that was not possible with such ineffectual governance and without adequate resources. At the same time, the goal of achieving operational efficiency must go hand in hand with the goal of democratic and transparent decision-making and management.

Developing countries' indebtedness was one of the biggest single factors inhibiting the capacity of countries like Jamaica to provide social and economic security to their citizens. Often, the culprit was official debt owed to the Bretton Woods institutions and accumulated in the quest for economic growth through the funding of development projects and financing of stabilization and adjustment processes. Relevant questions had been raised about the relationship of the international financial institutions with United Nations agencies, particularly in the light of the World Bank's increasing activities in technical assistance.

In conclusion, she welcomed the proposal for an open-ended working group put forward by Pakistan, on behalf of the Group of 77.

Mr. GHAREKHAN (India) said that any attempt at reform in the economic and social sphere of United Nations activities should not infringe upon the very basis of multilateralism: the principles of universality, democratic functioning and the sovereign equality of Member States.

With every year that passed, the global agenda was becoming more complex. The role of United Nations debate in understanding that complexity must not be marginalized. Political debate in the General Assembly leading to consensus on development cooperation was a vital function that should not be abridged or brushed aside. Equally important was the question of delivery, of translation into action. There was an increasing feeling in the world that the United Nations response mechanism in the economic field could be strengthened, to everyone's benefit.

One recurrent theme in the Secretary-General's reports for the high-level segment had been the causal relationship between the crisis in development and political and social upheaval. While ethnic, religious and social tensions also underlay civil strife, they were exacerbated by economic inequalities and

(Mr. Gharekhan, India)

deprivation. In several parts of the world, economic interdependence and the benefits of peace had helped to push social and other tensions into the background. Economic development, therefore, would in itself help in avoiding conflict.

While tackling in a symptomatic way the consequences of disasters and conflicts, the United Nations system must simultaneously pursue the larger goal of cooperation for development. Interdependence was more than chimerical.

His delegation wished to stress the need for more assured and stable funding for operational activities. Attempts at harmonization of internationally accepted goals should be sensitive to country-specific policies, priorities and programmes.

India welcomed institutional reform, particularly if it ended duplication, enhanced democracy and transparency and gave the Organization a businesslike orientation. The Council might confine itself to high-level political advice, coordination and operational activities, while the issues debated in its Economic and Social Committees might be more comprehensively discussed in the committees of the General Assembly, the appropriate universal body to discuss those important issues.

At the current session, there had been several proposals for revitalizing the Council. All reflected a pervasive and justifiable will to change. However, before they could be accepted or rejected they must be more fully thought out. If new ideas were to become the major focal points for discussion for further reform then it would seem that reform itself was the end and not the means for enhanced development cooperation.

Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil) said that events of the past few years had generated the expectation that the improved international political environment would facilitate the achievement of the ideals of cooperation envisioned in the United Nations Charter. Thus far, however, progress had not been equal in all spheres. Although the revitalization of the Security Council had given renewed credibility to United Nations actions as a central factor in ensuring peace and security, the Organization's activities in the field of economic and social development had proved less effective.

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

The success of the national economic policies of the developing countries was largely contingent on a positive response to those policies at the international level. His Government was concerned that a prolonged stalemate in the Uruguay Round would seriously jeopardize the multilateral approach to international trade by reinforcing trends towards the formation of closed trading blocs and undermining trade-liberalization reforms of the developing countries, which often had been implemented amidst serious fiscal difficulties and at a high social cost. Similarly, entrepreneurship in the developing countries would be hampered by non-economic barriers to the free flow of knowledge and to equitable access to markets and technology.

Genuine international economic cooperation - which was much broader than technical assistance and policy advice - was nothing less than the framing of an international order with international patterns of State interaction in the areas of trade, finance and technology that were favourable to economic growth and sustainable development. There were encouraging opportunities for international economic cooperation, which could build, inter alia, on the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, the Cartegena consensus and General Assembly resolution 45/264 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. New initiatives, including the Nordic memorandum on reform of United Nations governance and finance (E/1992/91, annex) and various proposals advanced during the high-level segment should be incorporated in the institutional framework for revitalization, while preserving the principle of democratic participation in decision-making. The remarks by the representative of India concerning institutional reform were of considerable merit in that regard.

The results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development recently held in Rio de Janeiro had eloquently demonstrated the ability of the international community, working at the highest political level, to elaborate a constructive agenda for action on issues of universal concern. The Conference, which had established sustainable development as a keystone of international cooperation on the basis of mutuality of interests

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

and recognition of common but differentiated responsibilities, had opened up prospects for cooperation in matters of particular concern to many developing countries, including desertification. The Commission on Sustainable Development to be set up by the General Assembly would play a key role in translating the spirit of Rio into action, and efforts undertaken to follow up on the Conference would prove an acid test of the political will to act decisively to promote development and protect the environment. He pledged his Government's continuing commitment to those goals.

Mr. AL-FAIHANI (Bahrain) stressed the importance of enhancing international cooperation for development and the role of the United Nations system, particularly in view of the services it provided to Member States in accordance with the United Nations Charter. The United Nations was unique in providing a framework for understanding and social cooperation among States, and while it could not solve the world's development problems by itself, but relied on the assistance of the Member States, it played an essential role in negotiating far-reaching solutions and served as a link between the advanced and the developing countries.

Without the assistance which the United Nations had provided to developing States since its inception and without the efforts made by those States, it would clearly have been impossible for some developing countries to achieve advances in certain economic fields and in their standard of living. In order to preserve those advances, the United Nations must continue to offer its experience and assistance to those developing countries which had made significant progress in specific economic areas. In the past, considerable experience and assistance extended by the Organization had borne little fruit in terms of development. It was therefore important for the Organization to continue to encourage developing countries which had achieved some success in economic fields, rewarding them through development assistance wherever needed.

The United Nations must continue its leading role in international cooperation for development, to which end the cooperation of all Member States was required. That could be achieved only through a policy founded on support and assistance to all developing States, and no State should be excepted on the basis of differing developmental considerations.

Mr. JOMAA (Observer for Tunisia) said that the report of the Secretary-General (E/1992/82 and Add.1) merited thorough consideration. At a time of rapid change in the international political, economic and social arenas, marked by a very clear recognition of the true interdependence of countries, the United Nations should continue to play a leading role in the elaboration of the rules governing international relations. Its decisions, resolutions and recommendations and those of the specialized agencies concerned with development should be enforceable.

Unfortunately, many of the objectives established by the international community decades earlier had not yet been attained. The same energies which had been expended to strengthen the Security Council's role in the maintenance of peace and security should now be focused on enhancing the entire Organization, particularly those bodies concerned with development. The revitalization of the Economic and Social Council was a key element of that effort. General Assembly resolution 45/264 should serve as the basis for all future action in that regard, with a view to ensuring a truly integrated approach to economic, social and related issues. The suggestions of the Secretary-General, the Nordic countries and other delegations merited careful consideration, and he welcomed the idea of convening a working group to that end. The Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries and the International Development Stategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade provided the framework for the desired integrated approach.

It was urgent to find a lasting solution to the debt problem faced by a number of developing countries. Accompanying efforts should be made to stabilize currencies and encourage investments which did not generate new debt. He also underscored the importance of technical cooperation, which should enable developing countries which had the requisite human resources but lacked funds to participate in the development of other developing countries. Furthermore, a stronger multilateral trade environment would facilitate the integration of the developing countries in the world economy and attenuate the problems they often faced when introducing more liberal economic policies, particularly in the social sphere. His country attached high priority to the

(Mr. Jomaa, Observer, Tunisia)

development of the individual and respect for human rights and therefore endorsed the idea of convening a world summit on social development.

Now that the recent Rio Conference had so forcefully underscored the fact that development and respect for the environment were inseparable, the United Nations should play the central role in action subsequent to the Conference. The establishment of the new Commission on Sustainable Development that would report to the Council was to be welcomed.

Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh) said that the report of the Secretary-General (E/1992/82 and Add.1), his introductory statement and the policy dialogue and exchange of views with heads of multilateral financial and trade institutions of the United Nations system had been very useful. It was time to seize the opportunity of East-West détente to devote priority attention to global development. The United Nations was now in a unique position to assume a leadership role not only in the maintenance of peace and security, but also in respect of economic and social development and environmental matters. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative to reform and revitalize the Organization. The Nordic proposals in document E/1992/91 also constituted a valuable contribution to more efficient and dynamic United Nations participation in the coordination and operational aspects of economic and social activities.

Reforms must not be viewed as an end in themselves, and they must be pursued simultaneously with measures to accelerate social and economic development, and in particular, to eradicate poverty in the developing world. It was essential to increase resource flows to the developing countries, dismantle protectionism in international trade, increase market access, ensure fair commodity prices, promote the transfer of technology and resolve debt problems.

His delegation agreed that a closer relationship should be forged between the organs of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. However, the existing system, based on the principles of neutrality, democratic decision-making, transparency, respect for the sovereignty of Member States, non-conditionality of assistance and the provision of assistance on the basis of the needs, policies and priorities of recipient countries should be retained.

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

He underscored the urgency of implementing the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, noting with concern that assistance to those countries from their development partners had failed to reach established targets. Debt-relief efforts must be broadened and intensified to include all the least developed countries. Because that group of countries had been enlarged, provision for new and additional resources was of prime importance. His delegation hoped that special measures to mitigate their plight would be adequately reflected in the President's summary of the high-level segment.

Many developing countries, including his own, had instituted major policy reforms at considerable social and political cost. However, the external economic environment had not been conducive to the success of those policies owing to serious resource and technological constraints.

His delegation welcomed the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) at its eighth session with regard to the least developed countries, economic cooperation among developing countries and sustainable development, and emphasized the importance of strengthening the UNCTAD division concerned with least developed countries during the UNCTAD reform process. His delegation was encouraged by the outcome of the recent Rio Conference and envisaged a leading role for the United Nations in activities to support the efforts of the developing countries to achieve sustainable development. It also welcomed the decision to establish a Commission on Sustainable Development and the proposal for a future world summit on social issues.

It was of the utmost importance that the United Nations should be provided with the adequate mandate and means to carry out its responsibilities. The proposal put forward by Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 to establish a working group to follow up the discussions at the high-level segment was welcome in that connection.

Mr. KOSTARCZYK (Poland) said that, while he welcomed the proposals aimed at restructuring existing machinery, he agreed with those delegations which had cautioned against a proliferation of programmes and organs, overlapping and duplication.

(Mr. Kostarczyk, Poland)

His delegation was pleased with the progress already made in restructuring the Council, in particular the merging of the two substantive sessions and the decision to convene a high-level segment. It also favoured the convening of high-level inter-sessional meetings and endorsed the proposal to establish an open-ended working group.

His delegation supported steps to increase the effective functioning of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and noted with satisfaction the relevant points made by the Secretary-General. It was of the utmost importance to define the functional interrelationship between the Council and the General Assembly, in particular the latter's Second and Third Committees, in order to avoid duplication. His delegation also agreed with the need to improve the governance of operational activities. The Nordic memorandum (E/1992/91) constituted a good basis for decision-making in that regard, and the experience of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would also prove useful. His delegation favoured the unification of United Nations representation at the country level as a matter of principle, with a view to enhancing coordination at the country level and strengthening cooperation between the Organization and the countries concerned. Steps in that direction had recently been taken in his country.

Lastly, his delegation endorsed suggestions calling for enhanced interaction and communication between the regional commissions and other components of the United Nations system and between the constituent organizations and the Council.

Mr. SUTRESNA (Indonesia) said that new opportunities for multilateralism were opening up in the 1990s. As a result of the end of the cold war and the arms race and owing to rapid innovations in science and technology, prospects for growth and development were improving as national interests converged and recognition of the need for multilateral cooperation increased. Nevertheless, it would be almost impossible to revitalize multilateral cooperation for development without a revival of the world economy. World output had declined by 2 per cent in 1991, with grave consequences as economic and social conditions deteriorated.

(Mr. Sutresna, Indonesia)

As the principal forum for multilateral cooperation with universal membership, the United Nations was uniquely suited to promoting cooperation for development. Nevertheless, there was no specific international mechanism for that purpose and the economic gap between the developed and developing countries continued to grow. Low commodity prices, diminished access to markets and crippling debt burdens continued to characterize the plight of the developing countries. In view of the growing relationship between the political and the socio-economic fields, stability and security must be based on social and economic development. Peace-building efforts that incorporated the concept of broad-based equitable development were critically needed.

The United Nations was uniquely positioned to achieve its full potential in the economic and social fields. The consensus on multilateral cooperation for development achieved at the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly should be translated into specific and feasible programmes. His country called for a harmonized and integrated approach to United Nations activities and supported the Secretary-General's proposal to establish closer links between the international financial institutions and the United Nations system. The Non-Aligned Movement had recently given its full support to the ongoing revitalization of the United Nations, particularly the Council and its subsidiary bodies. In that context, he stressed the need to strengthen the political role of the General Assembly.

The United Nations had greatly expanded its activities in such areas as drug control, refugees, women in development and the rights of the child. In order to deal effectively with the many social development issues in the future, the Organization must take action forthwith to enhance its capacity to meet commitments. The Council should play a central role through policy guidance and reporting on social and economic development and should provide a cohesive structure for setting priorities and ensuring efficient use of resources.

Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile) stressed the need to carry out reforms in the administrative and financing bodies involved in United Nations operational activities in order to prevent duplication, improve programme implementation and develop better management and monitoring approaches without detriment to the principles of universality, neutrality and democracy.

(Mr. Somavia, Chile)

He supported the Nordic proposal concerning an international development council. Nevertheless, the Economic and Social Council itself should establish cooperation objectives and strategies, provide guidance for operational activities and coordinate the work of the executive bodies. His delegation opposed abolition of the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly, which were the sole bodies with universal access for discussing economic and social policies. Nevertheless, the agendas of those Committees and the Council itself should be rationalized to eliminate duplication. Chile supported the proposal to set up a small executive body for each agency. If such bodies functioned effectively and met frequently, they could ensure greater participation in and real control over operational activities. The members of those bodies should take account of regional interests and ensure that countries that were not members were adequately informed, consulted and represented through the various regional groups.

The United Nations regional commissions should be strengthened in all regions. The discussions in the Economic Committee had demonstrated the broad support for their activities. The dialogue with the heads of the Bretton Woods institutions should be expanded and there was a need to ensure better coordination between IMF, the World Bank and the Council. The Council could consider developing a dialogue with the representatives of Governments in those institutions.

The statements made by the heads of the specialized agencies had been very useful and contained constructive proposals. The financing of operational activities was an important issue. To be effective, the reform must be based on a greater commitment to cooperation activities and, therefore, increased resources. Accordingly, the consideration of institutional reforms should include an examination of the necessary financial measures.

Mr. NANDOE (Suriname) said that trade barriers and unequal access to the world's financial and labour markets were costing third world countries $500 billion annually in lost economic opportunities. That was equivalent to 10 times the amount of the foreign assistance provided to poor countries. The roots of insecurity, including economic and social injustices leading to

(Mr. Nandoe, Suriname)

poverty and repression, should be addressed. There was a need to formulate a concept of security based on health, education and equality of opportunity. One of the most serious obstacles to implementing economic and social programmes was the limited availability of funds. As a percentage of GNP, the aid from donor countries had remained at 0.34 per cent.

Very clear proposals had been made with regard to governance and finance. His delegation appreciated the views put forward by the Nordic countries (E/1992/91), which were aimed at further streamlining the Organization. The objective should be to ensure an effective, predictable and stable flow of funds for development. It was fortunate that some developed countries recognized the need to give a major impetus to United Nations institutions in the field of economic and social development. He hoped that during the discussions in the open-ended working group proposed by the Chairman of the Group of 77, the importance of the availability of the funds would be accepted by the major donor countries. Lastly, he stressed that the work of redefining development priorities and reforming the economic and social sectors of the United Nations should not in any way be to the detriment of the ideals of democracy and collective decision-making.

Mr. CORTES (Observer for Nicaragua) said that he supported the proposal made by Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 for the establishment of an open-ended working group to consider international cooperation for development before the next session of the General Assembly. His delegation agreed fully with the views expressed by Mexico on the relationship between peace and security on the one hand, and United Nations cooperation for development on the other. Both aspects, however, should be evaluated on their own merits by the competent forums of the Organization. Nicaragua also agreed that the decisions on restructuring the Council should be taken by Member States, with participation by other actors where advisable.

He supported the overall approach suggested by the Secretary-General in order to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization through better coordination of the various components of the system. His delegation attached particular importance to the balance to be established between the functioning of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security

(Mr. Cortes, Observer, Nicaragua)

Council and felt that the office of the President of the General Assembly should be strengthened to enable him to carry out a basic role in promoting the implementation of resolutions.

The Council should step up its work in analysing and monitoring official development assistance and its consideration of the conclusions reached on the transfer of financial resources by the IMF/World Bank Development Committee in order to define part of the functional link with the Bretton Woods institutions. He stressed the need to refrain from interfering with the functions and internal decisions of the executive bodies of the World Bank and IMF but rather to focus attention on a substantive dialogue concerning development policies and to set up flexible mechanisms for communication, follow-up and evaluation. The Council could evaluate biannually the financial policies of the multilateral agencies, or informal periodic meetings could be held between the President of the Council and the Chairmen of the IMF/World Bank Development Committee and the IMF Interim Committee. Through those contacts, the Council could determine the medium- and long-term prospects for world financial flows and at the same time provide the two Committees with information in order to define the nature of such funds.

Reform in the economic and social fields should promote the North-South dialogue. The results of recent conferences demonstrated that it was possible to reach agreement through negotiation on the basis of mutual interest and shared responsibility. They included the Cartagena Commitment reached at the eighth session of UNCTAD, Agenda 21 emerging from the recent Rio Conference, as well as the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation adopted at the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly and the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. Those agreements should provide the framework for action by the Council. With the necessary political will, it should be possible to arrive at other key North-South agreements in the next few years.

The Council should promote a dialogue aimed at overcoming international imbalances. Without an overall view and commitment, the adjustment processes in developing countries would always be temporary and insufficient. However, the revitalization of the Council should not become an end in itself, but

(Mr. Cortes, Observer, Nicaragua)

should serve to strengthen international cooperation for development, including human development in all its various forms. Organizational changes must be based on changes in attitudes in order to be lasting.

Mr. O'BRIEN (New Zealand) said that valuable suggestions had been put forward by the Secretary-General and the Nordic countries and that current discussions in the high-level segment augured well for a comprehensive and considered review of the United Nations role in development. In particular, recognition of the link between policy initiatives of the United Nations system, its technical assistance programmes and the work of the Bretton Woods institutions had opened up new lines of communication, especially valuable in an increasingly interdependent world.

While the goals for reform were generally agreed on, the mechanisms for their achievement remained less clear. Steps were urgently needed to overcome the current marginalization of the United Nations in development, but it was also essential to proceed with reform in a considered way, taking account of new developments. To that end, the United Nations must play a central part in the follow-up to the recent Rio Conference, and the reform of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council must be undertaken in concert with the creation of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to ensure an appropriate distribution of responsibilities.

Smaller countries like New Zealand readily subscribed to the Secretary-General's central premise concerning the close interrelationship of peace and security on the one hand, and economic and social development on the other; but he stressed that the economic and social mandate of the Organization should not, as a result, be subsumed under its political mandate, and expressed his delegation's support for an integrated United Nations approach with a renewed and updated development thrust. In addition, he agreed with the need for a better system-wide distribution of responsibilities and an improved balance between functions performed at Headquarters and by regional commissions and programmes, and supported the idea of a unified United Nations field presence with the designation of resident coordinators.

With regard to the proposed reform of individual agencies, designed to streamline the system, New Zealand was not convinced that smaller executive

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

bodies would ensure more effective management and stressed the need to maintain current levels of participation by smaller States, on the basis of equality, in the future governance of United Nations bodies.

It was paradoxical that, in a time of political multilateralism, the commitment to economic multilateralism could not be taken for granted, as was evidenced by the uncertain prospects for the Uruguay Round. Even the important process initiated by the Group of Seven major industrialized countries remained outside the multilateral economic framework. None the less, the serious dialogue in the high-level segment had furnished proof of a shared commitment to enhancing the United Nations role in development and he hoped that the Organization would prove capable of seizing the historic opportunity presented to it.

Mr. MONGBE (Benin) said that the transformation of international relations had enabled the General Assembly to concentrate on the search for solutions to economic and social problems, as evidenced by numerous important United Nations conferences over recent years and by the elaboration of various development-related programmes of action.

Benin believed that the United Nations must play a leading role in elaborating and implementing a rational policy to promote international cooperation for development. In particular, it was essential to recognize the right to development as an inalienable right; to promote regional or subregional economic integration policies; to stimulate economic development through programmes of action aimed at environmentally sound development; to improve the international economic climate by promoting the transfer of technology; to support the creation of an open and equitable trade system and the diversification and modernization of the economies of developing countries; to develop integrated environmental, resource-mobilization and job-creation programmes for underprivileged countries; and to persuade the rich countries to provide the necessary financial and technical assistance to developing countries, in particular the least developed and the small island developing countries.

His delegation welcomed the adoption of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and believed that, if properly

(Mr. Mongbe, Benin)

implemented, the programme would encourage specific cooperation measures and would help overcome the marginalization of Africa. The Organization must endeavour to promote the programme in every region of the world capable of assisting Africa in its development efforts. Particular attention should therefore be given to the implementation machinery, and the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa should be sufficiently well-staffed and equipped to ensure that it could operate effectively and mobilize the necessary resources.

Benin had noted with interest the review of the current development-financing mechanisms contained in the Nordic countries' memorandum (E/1992/91) and believed that their proposals should be carefully examined.

At the institutional level, his delegation warned that the restructuring of the Economic and Social Council should not be aimed at creating an "Economic Security Council", with permanent members, thus reinforcing the exclusion of the developing and small countries, both of the North and of the South. Economic problems were common to all Member States, and all should therefore participate in decisions. In particular, Benin believed that the Commission on Sustainable Development approved at the Rio Conference should play a key role in a revitalized Economic and Social Council, entrusted not only with monitoring implementation of the decisions of the Conference but also with promoting environmentally sound patterns of production and consumption.

In conclusion, he said that the Organization was at a turning-point in history, where serious multilateral dialogue should be initiated to address the numerous challenges of international cooperation and to usher in a new age of peace and security.

Mr. AYALA LASSO (Ecuador) said that it was all too frequently believed that international cooperation constituted generosity on the part of the "haves" towards the "have-nots". That belief was false and dangerous because international cooperation for development was the logical consequence of a humanistic concept of the dignity of the human person and of human solidarity. Rich societies had an inescapable moral obligation to contribute to the well-being of the poor. International cooperation for development,

(Mr. Ayala Lasso, Ecuador)

which had thus far been conceived of as a policy to be freely adopted or rejected, had been totally ineffective and the gap between the rich and poor had consequently increased to inhuman proportions, thereby constituting one of the prime causes of instability and endangering international peace and stability.

The international community had generally recognized the principle that it was impossible to achieve development without peace or peace without development. Thanks to modern communication technologies, the poor in the developing countries were well aware of how people in the developed countries lived, and everywhere individuals were increasingly demanding respect for their rights and an end to inequality and injustice. The recent lessening of international tensions had raised hopes for a better and more just world. The dashing of those hopes was giving rise to serious conflict. It was therefore time to purposefully address those problems and to adopt decisions that would satisfy universal aspirations for progress. In that regard, the reforms in the Council's method of work were a step in the right direction.

The United Nations needed to adapt its role to the changing international situation. With the cold war over, the Organization now had to wage a war against poverty, finance peace and not war, work to save lives and not to bring death, and create a world that was more just and balanced. Improving the quality of life of people and promoting international social justice should be the main concerns of the international community.

Ecuador attached particular importance to the proposed world summit for social development, which represented yet another response by the Organization to the problems of the world community and would provide a suitable forum for all countries to reflect on appropriate mechanisms for satisfying the human yearning for justice.

Mr. AL-KHARASHI (Observer for Saudi Arabia) said that international cooperation for development could not proceed unless States abandoned protectionism and trade policies that adversely affected the interests of other States.

In the case of environmental and energy issues, an international political will to intensify international cooperation and refrain from

(Mr. Al-Kharashi, Observer, Saudi Arabia)

unilateral measures was essential; more research must be encouraged in order to diminish the considerable scientific doubts that still surrounded the subject of climatic change, and any measures proposed must be comprehensive and must apply to all elements without discrimination. It made no sense to promote the use of energy sources and technology which were environmentally unsafe and the subject of considerable scientific doubt. The conditions and needs of both the developing countries and the world economy must be taken into account in the solutions proposed, so as not to impose high-cost structural changes on the economies of those countries, impair their development priorities or add to their financial burdens; rather, the industrialized countries should help them to avoid environmentally unsound aspects of development and to fight poverty and underdevelopment, which were among the major causes of environmental degradation.

Concerning the relationship between environment, energy and world economic growth, his delegation doubted that the proposed tax on certain fossil fuels could solve a problem world-wide in scope or reduce emission levels in the long run. Such a tax would have a severe impact on the economies of developing countries.

The cold war having come to an end, the economically strong nations must provide increased development assistance to developing countries, especially the poorest, and must strive to achieve the target figure of 0.7 per cent of gross national product. Saudi Arabia, in keeping with its humanitarian and cooperative role with respect to those States, had used 5.45 per cent of its gross national product for grants to developing countries; it ranked first in the world in terms of that percentage, and for a number of years had been second only to the United States in terms of the volume of financial aid provided. Indeed, during the period from 1973 to 1990, the total development assistance granted by the Kingdom through bilateral, regional and international channels had amounted to approximately $64 billion, benefiting 70 developing countries.

The Gulf crisis had impaired the region's development and its international cooperation. It was thus incumbent upon the world to take every

(Mr. Al-Kharashi, Observer, Saudi Arabia)

measure to ensure that there would be no repetition of that tragedy, of which both human beings and the environment were the victims.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that he had followed the debate in the high-level segment with interest and fully concurred with the view of participants concerning the need to reform and revitalize the Economic and Social Council. A number of useful proposals had been put forward, including those by the Nordic countries, the Netherlands and the United States, and he assured delegations that their many concerns would be taken into account in the restructuring.

Notable among those concerns were: the need for a more effective and stronger structure, avoiding duplication at the intergovernmental level and with the Secretariat; the need to draw up more rational and appropriate plans of action; in the revitalization exercise, ensuring respect for the democratic principles that underlay all decision-making in the United Nations; the need to secure a sufficient and stable supply of technical and financial resources, and to make contingencies for possible emergencies; and the need, at all times, to ensure respect for sovereignty and to observe the principle of neutrality. In addition, special attention would be given to the institutional arrangements for the implementation of Agenda 21, the cornerstone of international cooperation and a priority area of reform.

He fully shared the concerns of the members of the Group of 77 and other delegations about low economic growth in the industrialized countries, lack of access to Western markets for the exports of developing countries, their debt burden and obstacles to the transfer of science and technology. The persistent imbalance in the world economy required efforts on a global scale to bring about accelerated changes in its structure, and he assured the Group of 77 that the objectives of the peace and security process on the one hand, and of social development on the other, were entirely independent and that there would be no attempt to prioritize their respective requirements. There could be no peace without economic and social development and no economic and social development without peace and security, as evidenced by the crises in Somalia, Yugoslavia and other regions of the world.

(The Secretary-General)

His personal knowledge of life in the third world made him particularly sensitive to its problems, and he noted with concern the growing gap between rich and poor, both between and within States. It was essential to bridge that gap by increasing investment in human development, and he had therefore welcomed the human development ideas elaborated by the heads of the Bretton Woods institutions. Without stable and dynamic economic growth, poor countries could not hope to develop, even with appropriate macro-management policies and structural reforms. The resources of all the United Nations organizations and specialized agencies and of the multilateral financial institutions should therefore be directed primarily towards the elimination of poverty.

He also shared the view expressed by the Group of 77 that international cooperation should not be confined to operational activities, and stressed the need for the United Nations to continue to function, as it had over the years, as a think-tank for the conceptual formulation of approaches to the problems of the third world. In addition, it should apply continued pressure on certain key points to promote economic and social cooperation for the benefit of developing countries and countries in transformation, with a view to ensuring, inter alia, improved access to markets, debt-alleviation measures, the provision of credit, transfer of technology and the redirection of military spending towards more productive investments. Although the cold war had ended, new military conflicts had erupted and unremitting efforts must be made to reduce military spending.

He fully agreed with the view of IMF that the United Nations should apply itself to the task of rebuilding the social dimension, which, in combination with structural adjustment, development and trade, constituted the fourth pillar of its system and was essential to its stability. For that reason it was important to work towards the proposed world summit for social development. He also welcomed the proposal that he should be associated with the work of the IMF/World Bank Development Committee.

It was his hope that the Economic and Social Council would become an organ as important as the Security Council and he believed that, given the necessary political will, the Economic and Social Council could become the

(The Secretary-General)

council of the future, of the post-war period, which would help create the world to which humanity aspired, a world of equality, prosperity and development, in which the gap between rich and poor was closed and which was characterized by a growing solidarity designed to protect society and to guarantee its right to a better life and prosperity, one of the major goals of the Organization and of the entire United Nations system.

The PRESIDENT said that, on the basis of the statements made during the high-level segment and consultations with members of the Council and of the Bureau, he had decided to establish an open-ended ad hoc working group of the Council for the purpose of holding consultations on the item currently under discussion prior to the opening of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Recommendations should be elaborated during those consultations for consideration and appropriate action by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. The working group should pay due attention to the implications for the working of the United Nations system of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, the Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its eighteenth special session, the Cartagena Commitment reached at the eighth session of UNCTAD, the Declaration adopted by the recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. All those elements should serve as guidelines for the work of the working group.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.